

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2903

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to making reforms necessary to improve student academic achievement.

Brief Description: Making reforms necessary to improve student academic achievement.

Sponsors: Representatives Talcott, Quall, Cox, Curtis, Roach, Orcutt, Holmquist, Woods, Shabro, Ericksen, Anderson, Serben, Nixon, Haler, McCune, Haigh, Sump, Priest, Armstrong, Santos, Hinkle, Strow, Newhouse and Rodne.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/30/06, 2/1/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to reimburse school districts for administration of diagnostic assessments in grades 9 and 10.
- Directs the SPI to make diagnostic assessment tools available for school districts by September 1, 2007.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Priest, Santos, Shabro, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Prior to 2005, school districts were required to administer nationally norm-referenced tests such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to all students in grades 3, 6, and 9. Legislation enacted in 2005 repealed this requirement, but stated that the Legislature intended to allow school districts to continue using these types of assessments at district expense. The legislation also directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), within available funds and by September 1, 2006, to make diagnostic assessments available to school districts to help improve student learning. To the maximum extent possible, these diagnostic assessments

must be aligned to the state's Grade Level Expectations, individualized to each student, provide results in a timely fashion, and be capable of measuring student growth over time.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Legislature intends to provide funding for diagnostic assessments for early intervention before the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Beginning September 1, 2007, rather than 2006, the SPI must make diagnostic assessments available to assist school districts. These assessments, in addition to having other characteristics, should allow student progress to be compared across the country and be readily available to parents.

Beginning with the 2006-07 school year and from funds appropriated for this purpose, the SPI must reimburse school districts for administering diagnostic assessments in grades 9 and 10 for the purpose of identifying academic weaknesses and developing strategies to assist students before the high school WASL.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill directed the SPI to cease further implementation of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in grades three, five, six, and eight and seek a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The SPI was directed to review and approve the Learning Assistance Program plans submitted from school districts in a federal needs improvement status and withhold funds until the plans were approved. Beginning with the 2008 assessment, the SPI would release the complete tenth grade WASL, including correct responses, at the same time student scores were released. The listing of a student's highest WASL score on the high school transcript was delayed to 2008 for reading, writing, and mathematics and 2010 for science. School districts would be required to offer diagnostic tests to students in grades 8, 9, and 10 and college placement tests to all tenth grade students. Students could use mathematics scores on certain college placement tests as an alternative assessment for the mathematics portion of the WASL.

The substitute bill addresses a single subject: diagnostic assessments. Beginning September 1, 2007, rather than 2006, the SPI must make diagnostic assessments available to assist school districts. Beginning with the 2006-07 school year, the SPI must reimburse school districts for administering diagnostic assessments in grades 9 and 10.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 3, 2006.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes affect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support of striking amendment) We face great challenges and this bill tries to address a number of important issues. The striking amendment narrows the bill to a

single critical topic: voluntary, diagnostic assessments in grades 9 and 10. We have learned a great deal about assessment and the importance of cost-effective and immediate results that are focused on the child. The other issues in the original bill should become part of a larger package on remediation. There is enthusiastic support and belief in the importance of early diagnostic assessments. We cannot improve student learning and teaching without these tools.

(With concerns on striking amendment) Offering the assessments in grades 7 and 8 might be more beneficial. Funding would be needed to support these tools.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support of striking amendment) Representative Talcott, prime sponsor; Leslie Goldstein, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Gary King, Washington Education Association; and Christie Perkins, Washington Special Education Coalition.

(With concerns on striking amendment) Don Rash, Association of Washington School Principals.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.